

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Agency Conversion to the Metric System

REFERENCE: Memo dtd 14 Mar 74 to C/P&PS/OL fr DD/L, same subject

1. As the reference suggested, the undersigned informally discussed the question of conversion to the metric system with representatives of Procurement Division, Real Estate and Construction Division, Supply Division, and Logistics Services Division. No attempt was made to obtain an official Division position in any case, so my conversations were carried on with people at the functional level who would probably have a better feel for how conversions would impact on their day-to-day operations.

2. Responses were fairly predictable. Real Estate and Construction Division engineers, of course, believe that they could adapt to the metric system without much difficulty. Not only has the metric system been used in their academic training, but their overseas construction projects have to be expressed in metric units so that indigenous engineers and craftsmen can understand them. For all practical purposes, our engineers are on a dual measurement system already.

3. Supply, Procurement, and Logistics Services Division representatives, whose major concerns are in the areas of equipment and supplies, see a major conversion effort as manufacturers and suppliers convert to metrically measured specifications and units of issue. Since such an industrial conversion would probably be gradual, and would become necessary only after national legislation required it, a massive and short-run conversion is rather unlikely. Further, since the entire Government would have to set standards for conversion before this Agency could take any action with regard to supplies and equipment measurement or unit conversion, we are not faced with any immediate requirement to begin conversion planning.

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STATINTL 4. The rather long-range aspects of this question were supported by [REDACTED] who authored the recommendations contained in the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) "Report of the Metric Panel." He restated that the USIB report addresses intelligence reporting only and purposely refrained from making recommendations in any other area. The Board recognized that industrial conversion would be a whole new ball game. [REDACTED] went on to say that it is doubtful that Congressional legislation will be forthcoming during this session, or the next for that matter, since the "metric conversion" is a very low-key proposal. He indicated that even when and if Congress passes legislation, conversion throughout the total Government is expected to take 10 or more years. Because the USIB proposal for intelligence reporting by metric measurement is more logical and acceptable within the intelligence community, they can plan for that. He doubted, however, that any meaningful planning could be done by the Agency in an area such as logistics.

STATINTL 5. In view of the constraints and the time frame within which metric conversion is being considered, it might be premature to set an objective which says we will "...complete a plan for the orderly conversion to the use of the metric system. . . ."

STATINTL [REDACTED]